

NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE
MONTHLY UPDATE FOR OCTOBER 2003

October proved a very busy and productive month for the Institute, despite a significant computer crash that has delayed correspondence with many of our colleagues and caused this report to be sent out late. The files have now been recovered and I hope to catch up on my tardy correspondences soon.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE INSTITUTE STAFF AND PARTNERS THIS MONTH:

- Louise Hose (LH) attended the Karst Waters Institute's *Interdisciplinary Workshop on Epikarst* where she presented a poster and had the opportunity to discuss NCKRI with dozens of the world's leading cave and karst researchers. The workshop drew participants from Canada, France, Hungary, New Zealand, Slovenia, Ukraine, and across the United States.
- LH met for 2 hours with Tom Aley of the Ozark Underground Laboratory, a for-profit corporation, for a productive discussion of his ideas, concerns, and potential collaborative efforts between the Lab and the Institute.
- The Institute held a facilitator-run, 2-day meeting with a small but diverse group of cave/karst program representatives on October 5th & 6th in Shepherdstown, WV, to discuss the Institute's operational & administrative vision. Susan Warner of LEAD Alliance provided professional facilitation for the meeting. LH, Dave Shaver, Ed Kassman, and Lindsay McClellan of NPS-GRD, Associate Director Mike Soukup (NPS-WASO), Penny Boston (NMT), and representatives from 5 other academic institutes, 2 state programs, 5 non-profit organizations, 2 national parks, and 5 other federal agencies (BLM, USFS, USGS, EPA, USFWS) participated.
- Roger Scott (RS) continued follow-up communications with Vision Workshop participants.
- RS drafted, coordinated and sent out a news release for the Vision Workshop.
- *Recommendations and Guidelines for Managing Caves on Protected Lands*, a textbook-style publication prepared as a collaborative project of the Karst Waters Institute (KWI) and the National Cave and Karst Research Institute, was received from the printer. KWI and vendors are now selling the publication and we have been told that the French Ministry for the Environment is already considering a translation of the book for their land managers.
- We now have a banner carrying the full name of the Institute plus the logos of the three primary partners (New Mexico Tech, Carlsbad, & NPS). It will be available and displayed at various events nationwide.
- Larry Coalson of the New Mexico State University's Small Business Development Center in Carlsbad met twice with the Institute staff to provide guidance on structuring and writing a business plan. Coalson also shared mid-1990s documents covering NCKRI strategic planning, proposed budgeting, and operating and staffing plans.
- LH gave a presentation about the Institute to the Carlsbad Potash Section of the Society of Mining Engineers.

- LH attended the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium in Gainesville, FL, which the Institute co-sponsored. She provided an oral presentation and took advantage of many opportunities to discuss the Institute and potential future partnerships with federal and non-federal cave and karst programs nationwide, particularly in the Ozarks region, Virginia, Indiana, West Virginia, and Florida. NPS-GRD staff members Ron Kerbo and Lindsay McClelland also attended and talked to participants about the Institute.
- Doug Soroka and Lynn Kleina gave slide presentations to the American Association of University Women in Doylestown, PA, and to a Boy Scouts Venturing Program in the same area on their recent volunteer efforts working with the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) on behalf of the Institute.
- The Institute and NPS-GRD staff continued working with Jon Tully of the City of Carlsbad on a General Agreement to allow the transfer of \$1,956,900 to the City for the headquarters building.
- Joel Webb, Director of the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center (which currently houses NCKRI), accepted a position at the University of Nebraska. Webb has been a strong supporter of and advisor to the Institute and we will miss his presence in Carlsbad. Deborah Moir is serving as CEMRC's Interim Director and has continued the Center's vital support of NCKRI.
- LH, Penny Boston, and Lewis Land prepared presentations for the Geological Society of America national meeting.
- RS catalogued books previously donated to the NCKRI Library.
- The Institute compiled an initial NCKRI media contact list
- LH provided a grant proposal review to a non-profit, private field research funding organization.
- Susan Warner of LEAD Alliance provided her summary of the contributions made by Vision Workshop participants. The material was mailed to Workshop participants and the former Federal Working Group. Copies of the Executive Summary and supporting data are available by request sent to nckri-mail@cemrc.org
- RS provided logistics for Vision Workshop, hotel, NCTC coordination, information and support for attendees, etc.
- LH and RS began working on NCKRI Business Plan, striving to incorporate the views of the Vision Workshop participants.
- At New Mexico Tech, the Chief Scientist search committee has received the applications from the Human Resources Department and is currently assessing them. A selection of three interviewees is in progress. Interviewing will begin in the first several weeks of November with a decision to be made before the end of the month and an employment offer proffered to the top candidate.
- NCKRI and Tech's Cave and Karst Program played a major role in this year's President's Report that is submitted annually to the New Mexico State Commission on Higher Education. This report reflects the first full year of the NCKRI-associated Cave and Karst Studies Program at the University. In other Tech news, the Hydrology Research Group within which Cave and Karst Studies is housed, was once again ranked 4th in the nation by US News and World

Report. New Mexico Tech, as a whole, was ranked 14th this year by Kiplinger Magazine in their "Best Buys in Higher Education" listing.

- Individual research efforts at NM Tech continue with 3 new funded starts within the past 6 weeks, one from the National Science Foundation to study biogenic ferromanganese deposits in caves, and the other 2 from NASA's Institute for Advanced Concepts to study the possibility of extraterrestrial caves on bodies like Mars and the Moon, and a joint project with the Field and Space Robotics Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop concepts for microrobotic access to narrow or chemically hazardous cave passages in Earth caves and for eventual extraterrestrial application.
- Inquiries from prospective graduate students seeking a cave and karst oriented study program continue to come in to Tech. Four new PhD students and one new Master's student are tentatively scheduled for arrival between Spring and Fall 2004. Because of recent successful proposals for funding, there are additional slots available for undergraduate and graduate students in several of the projects.
- Current Master's student, Setsuko Shindo, is working with Carlsbad Caverns hydrologist Paul Burger, on micrometeorological assessment of Carlsbad Cavern. State of the art instrumentation, e.g. ultrasonic anemometers, chilled-mirror hygrometers, etc., are scheduled to be deployed in the cave during the 2003 holiday break period. New Mexico State University Master's student, Morgan Perrone, is actively working on the calcite moonmilk found in abundance within one passage of Spider Cave. Both students are working under the direction of Boston.

PLANS: Anticipated activities for the near future include:

- The Institute hopes to move ahead toward writing a business/operations plan by the end of the year. This plan will include a proposal for how the Institute will be jointly administered and how the transition might be accomplished.
- NMT will interview and hopes to hire a Visiting Chief Scientist for the Institute this fall.
- LH and Land will attend the Geological Society of America meeting in early November and present posters. Shaver and other members of the NPS-Geologic Resources Division will also attend and be available to answer questions.
- The City and Institute Director will begin regular meetings with the building design firm immediately after the GSA meeting.

NCKRI STAFF:

LH – Louise Hose, National Park Service

RS – Roger Scott, National Park Service

LL – Lewis Land, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR)

PB – Penelope Boston, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology